

CHAPTER 4

Public Comments and Coordination

This chapter describes how MoDOT involved and consulted with members of the public and project stakeholders regarding potential improvements along I-70 in Kansas City and Independence, Missouri. The chapter includes a discussion of the tools used to involve the public. Summaries of the public comments from all of the outreach efforts are in **Appendix E**. The chapter also explains how MoDOT followed the guidelines for public and stakeholder coordination as mandated by SAFETEA-LU.

Why is Public Involvement Important?

Public involvement for projects like the I-70 FTEIS is important for two key reasons:

1. MoDOT wants the public to be aware of the project and how it may affect them.
2. MoDOT needs public input to make the project better. Public input is used to define, evaluate, and refine alternative strategies. Public input also helps identify community grocery stores, churches, and other community resources that are important and ensures the project is responsive to the needs of the communities.

Public involvement should be timely, useful, and used in making the project better. Quality public involvement means that everyone who wants to be involved in the process has an opportunity to do so.

What was MoDOT's Plan for Involving Members of the Public?

MoDOT developed a detailed Public Involvement and Agency Coordination Plan specifically for the I-70 FTEIS. This plan complied with the requirements of SAFETEA-LU, the National Environmental Policy Act, and MoDOT. The plan was

Who are stakeholders?

Stakeholders are individuals and groups who are affected by or have an interest in a particular project or action. Stakeholders include property owners and residents, community groups, business groups, developers, utility companies, school districts, umbrella organizations (chambers of commerce, neighborhood associations, etc.), and elected/appointed officials at the federal, state, county, and local levels.

What is SAFETEA-LU?

Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) is the bill that governs the U.S. federal transportation spending for the years of 2004 to 2009.

circulated to potential cooperating and participating agencies for review and comment. The plan was also posted on the project website for public review and comment. The plan will be updated on the website as needed during the course of the project. This plan can be found on the project website at www.modot.org/kansascity/metroi70.

The goals of the Public Involvement and Agency Coordination Plan regarding public involvement included:

- Identification of early coordination efforts.
- Establishing the timing and format for the public to have opportunities to be involved and comment on the project.
- Describing the communication methods to be implemented to inform the community and solicit feedback.
- Developing a process that achieves informed public consent regarding the project and its outcomes.

What is the Federal Register?

The Federal Register is the official daily publication for rules, proposed rules, and notices of Federal agencies and organizations, as well as executive orders and other presidential documents.

How Did MoDOT Announce the Project?

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is responsible for this FTEIS and needs to officially notify the public when the project will begin. The FHWA satisfied this requirement by publishing a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register. This notice was issued on June 27, 2008 and published in the July 9, 2008 issue of the Federal Register (Vol. 73, No. 132, Pg. 39371). A copy of this Notice of Intent is located in **Appendix E**.

MoDOT announced the project to potential stakeholder agencies through a series of letters sent out in June and July 2008. MoDOT also informally announced the project to the public through a series of newsletters, postcards, and flyers distributed within the Study Area in August 2008.

How did the Study Team coordinate with Federal, State, and Local Agencies?

Agreement and input is critical in order to proceed through the study. As a result, an early effort to coordinate with

federal and state agencies took place. Early coordination letters and preliminary study information were sent to these agencies in July 2008. The agencies listed below and their response letters are included in **Appendix E**.

Participating and Cooperating Agencies

There were no cooperating agencies identified for the I-70 FTEIS. The following agencies were invited to become participating agencies:

Environmental Resource Agencies:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MoDNR)
- Missouri Department of Conservation (DOC)
- Missouri Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Missouri State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA)

Local Study Management Agencies:

- City of Independence, Missouri
- City of Kansas City, Missouri
- Kansas City Area Transit Authority (KCATA)
- Mid-America Regional Council (MARC)
- Jackson County, Missouri

In addition, nine tribal governments were invited by FHWA as consulting parties to identify properties of tribal interest. Two tribal responses were received. The invitation letters and responses are included in **Appendix E**.

The resource agencies were invited to attend a scoping meeting on July 16, 2008 to describe the study, identify key environmental issues to be considered for the project, and conduct a site tour of the Study Area. A second meeting was held November 3, 2008 to discuss potential concepts,

What are cooperating and participating agencies?

The most recent major federal transportation legislation, SAFETEA-LU, included two types of agencies for specific involvement in the preparation of environmental studies.

Cooperating Agencies are federal and state agencies with a specific expertise or authority (such as needing to issue a permit) for the project.

Participating Agencies are a wider group of government stakeholders. All federal, state, regional, and local government agencies that may have an interest in the project are invited to serve as participating agencies.

strategies, and ask for comments on the project's Purpose and Need document and Public Involvement and Agency Plan.

The local study management agencies were invited to the scoping meeting on June 16, 2008 to describe the study, identify key environmental issues to be considered for the project, and conduct a site tour of the Study Area. Seven additional meetings were held with the local study management agencies to share project updates, request document reviews, and receive feedback on key issues and decisions. Details of the meetings are listed in **Table 4.1**.

Table 4.1 Local Study Management Agency Meetings

Date	Location	Topic of Discussion
July 21, 2008	MoDOT District 4 – Lee's Summit	Project Update
September 15, 2008	MoDOT District 4 – Lee's Summit	Project Update, Strategy Packages Development
November, 3, 2008 (With Resource Agency Meeting)	MoDOT District 4 – Lee's Summit	Project Update, Strategy Packages Development
December 8, 2008	MoDOT District 4 – Lee's Summit	Initial Strategy Package Screening, Public Involvement Activities
February 19, 2009	MoDOT District 4 – Lee's Summit	First Tier Strategy Package Screening, Public Involvement Results
May 4, 2009	MoDOT District 4 – Lee's Summit	Preferred Strategy Discussion
June 15, 2009	MoDOT District 4 – Lee's Summit	Draft Identified Preferred Strategy

How Could Members of the Public Learn More About the Project?

MoDOT developed several ways for members of the public to learn more about the project. These included a project website, a project phone number, project newsletters, a speaker's bureau, public meetings and listening posts, and other project interactive activities.

Project Website: MoDOT setup a project website to provide convenient access to project information 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The website went live on August 19, 2008 before the first round of public meetings. The website is located at www.modot.org/kansascity/metroi70.



The website was advertised through project meetings, media releases, newsletters, post cards, business cards handed out at events, and on variable message signs operated by Kansas City Scout along I-70.

Project Phone Number: The project used the MoDOT information line, 1-888-ASK-MoDOT, as the phone number for the public to get information about the project. Calls were forwarded to the MoDOT Project Manager. During the January 2009 public outreach effort, 15 to 20 people called to inquire about the project. In total, approximately 25 people have called the project phone line from the beginning of the project to June 2009.

Speaker's Bureau: MoDOT established a speaker's bureau for the project. Study Team members are available to attend neighborhood, business, and community organization meetings by request. The Study Team sent an invitation letter to more than 30 organizations along the corridor inviting them to request a speaker. The Study Team also posted a speaker's bureau request form on the project website. As of June 2009, Study Team members have presented at seven community

What is a Speaker's Bureau?

The I-70 FTEIS Speaker's Bureau includes designated Study Team members who will attend neighborhood, business, and/or community meetings, by request, to discuss the I-70 FTEIS project.

group meetings. The Study Team presented at the following the community group meetings:

- Carriage Hills Neighborhood Watch Association
- MARC – Total Transportation Policy Committee
- Kansas City Chamber of Commerce – Transportation Committee
- Downtown Council – Infrastructure Committee
- Columbus Park Community Council
- Kansas City Transportation Authority – Industry Day Convention
- Heritage Park Condominium Association

MoDOT staff also attended the public hearing for the I-435/Manchester Interchange project and setup a table to provide information for the I-70 FTEIS project.

Newsletters, Postcards, and Flyers: The Study Team used a series of newsletters, postcards, and flyers to provide information about the project, upcoming public involvement opportunities, to invite people to access the project website, and to invite them to sign-up on the project mailing list. They were made available at meetings and placed on the project website. Further newsletters will be developed for the Public Hearing and the Final FTEIS.



September Public Meeting

What Public Meetings did MoDOT hold for the project?

MoDOT held two rounds of public outreach prior to the publication of this draft FTEIS. Public meetings or listening posts allowed members of the public to speak one on one with the Study Team. All meetings were held in an open house format over two to three hours and members of the public could stop by at any time during the meetings.

September 2008 Meetings

The first series of public meetings were held in September 2008, details are shown in **Table 4.2**. The purpose of the first set of meetings was to:

- Introduce the project
- Explain why improvements are needed
- Discuss environmental constraints
- Provide information on the initial concepts for improving I-70

Members of the public attending the meeting were asked the following three questions:

- What are the problems in the corridor?
- What needs to be fixed and how would you fix it?
- How does the corridor affect your everyday life?

Members of the public were also able to discuss their concerns one on one with Study Team members.



Public Meeting

Table 4.2 Public Meetings

Meeting Date and Time	Location	Meeting Type
September 9, 2008 4 pm to 7 pm	St. Paul School of Theology, Holter Center Cafeteria (5123 E. Truman Road, Kansas City)	Weekday Evening Public Open House
September 11, 2008 4 pm to 7 pm	Truman High School (3301 S. Noland Road, Independence)	Weekday Evening Public Open House
September 13, 2008 9 am to 11 am	Central High School (3221 Indiana Avenue, Kansas City)	Saturday Morning Public Coffee and Open House
September 27, 2008 9 am to 11 am	Don Bosco Senior Center (580 Campbell Street, Kansas City)	Saturday Morning Public Coffee and Open House

The September 2008 public meetings were promoted through the following methods:

- Approximately 2,700 post cards were distributed to residents and businesses near the corridor. Post cards with Spanish and Vietnamese translations were sent to encourage participation of these language groups that live in the Study Area.

What is an umbrella organization?

An umbrella organization is an association of industry specific business, groups, or companies who work together. Example – Chambers of Commerce.

- Approximately 8,400 newsletters were distributed to residents and businesses near the corridor. These were also translated into Spanish and Vietnamese.
- Approximately 300 flyers were mailed to umbrella organizations, agencies, businesses, and public officials.
- A media release was sent by MoDOT to local media outlets in the Kansas City area.

The September public meetings attracted 54 members of the public. In an effort to increase the public's participation, the Study Team changed their approach for the next round of public outreach. In January 2009, MoDOT held an on-line meeting and a Listening Post.

January 2009 On-line Public Meeting

MoDOT posted the First Tier Strategies on the project website for public review and comment from January 2nd to January 31st as part of an on-line public meeting. The on-line meeting provided an interactive PowerPoint presentation that each visitor could view at their pace, provide blog comments, and e-mail comments to MoDOT.

January 6, 2009 Listening Post

MoDOT held an open house listening post on January 6, 2009 at the Holter Center, St. Paul's School of Theology. This listening post allowed members of the public to view and comment on the First Tier Strategies for improving I-70. The listening post included displays as well as laptop computers that members of the public could use to access the on-line public meeting.



Listening Post

The on-line meeting and listening post were promoted through the following methods:

- Approximately 3,070 post cards were distributed to residents and businesses near the corridor. Post cards with Spanish and Vietnamese translations were sent to encourage participation of these language groups that live in the Study Area.

- Newsletters were sent to prior meeting attendees and members of the project mailing list.
- A media release was sent by MoDOT to local media outlets in the Kansas City area.
- Details of the meeting were posted on the Kansas City Scout electronic variable message signs along the corridor from December 31, 2008 to January 31, 2009.

I-470/291	3 MIN
I-435	8 MIN
DOWNTOWN	16 MIN

KC SCOUT message sign

More than 940 individuals visited the on-line public meeting. The website has an online comment and question form that can be filled out and sent to the Study Team. The comment form is also available in Spanish and Vietnamese, two prevalent languages spoken in the Study Area. More than 120 people have sent comments or requested information from the website.

What is Kansas City Scout?

Kansas City Scout is the metropolitan region's traffic management system that provides traveler information to the public through the local media, variable message signs, and the internet.

What Other Activities and Meetings Did MoDOT Use to Involve the Public?

Mobile Voice Van

MoDOT vinyl wrapped an existing 12-passenger van, provided a display tent, and backdrop to share information about the First Tier strategy packages with the community. The van was stationed for two-hours at the following events:

- Kansas City Chiefs Football Game on December 21, 2008
- Wal-Mart Super Center on Blue Ridge Boulevard in Independence, MO on January 9, 2009.



Mobile Voice Van Event



Members of the Study Team circulated the event location to talk with the community about the project and distributed "Contact Us" business cards.



Front of the "Contact Us" business card



Back of the "Contact Us" business card

How Did MoDOT Provide Information Through the Media?

MoDOT uses a variety of media outlets to provide public meeting information. For the I-70 FTEIS, press releases were sent to 87 representatives of Kansas City area newspapers, television stations, and radio stations.

What are the Next Public Participation Steps?

There will be a public hearing on the Draft FTEIS in the Fall of 2009.